Promoting Professional Learning Through On-Going and Interactive Support:

Three Cases within Physical Education

Abstract

This paper reports on three cases where university professors have provided an on-going and interactive support system for teachers learning a particular curriculum and instructional model in physical education in their own schools. Each of these initiatives was grounded in the idea that previous efforts at professional development in settings outside of the school led to less than successful implementation of innovative practice once teachers returned to their own settings. The three cases provide a description of the rationale for professional development initiative, followed by a more extensive description of the professional development itself and its resultant outcomes. The third part of each scenario serves to highlight the challenges faced by the providers and the teachers during the course of the professional development. Three major themes (time, accessibility and modeling) are discussed in terms of the implications for professional development not only in physical education, but across subject areas.

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While many authors in various different contexts have reported positive outcomes from professional development initiatives (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon, 2001; Glovera and Miller, 2009; Timperley, Parra, and Bertanees, 2009), there is also evidence that good intentions do not always meet reality. Specifically, Burbank and Kauchak (2003) note that professional development opportunities are often limited in the degree to which teachers can work actively and collaboratively, and encourage initiative in which teachers can generate, invest in, and participate actively and equally in the professional development opportunities before them. Within physical education, for example, Armour and Yelling (2007) have suggested that many programs suffer from "problems of relevance" and therefore make it difficult for teachers to apply their new knowledge in their own school contexts. Instead, Armour and Yelling (2007) suggest that the provision of professional development could be turned on its head, with teachers setting the agenda based upon their own collaborative assessment of their pupils' learning needs. Indeed, the general conclusion from a series of studies in the delivery of professional development is that (i) teachers need to see how their practice impacts student learning for them to continue use of the practice, (ii) staff development programs must provide continual support and follow-up after initial training, and (iii) such programs must address the needs of teachers and their local contexts (Bechtel and O'Sullivan, 2006; Guskey, 2002; Schwager and Doolittle, 1988).

Essentially, this change in focus has encouraged a change in rhetoric from the traditional conception of "professional development" to one of "professional learning". Professional

development typically tends to refer to formal courses, and there has been criticism of such efforts where these opportunities are one-off events, providing little or no follow-up support (Armour and Yelling, 2004; Mockler, 2005). Saying that, professional development does strive to include the desire to enhance student learning experiences, the need to reconceptualise learning and teaching in the context of increasing and widening participation, as well as curriculum change (Edwards and Nicoll, 2006).

Professional learning, on the other hand, constitutes the learning that is undertaken on a daily basis embedded within the remit of teaching, is underpinned by research and practice-based evidence, and is supported by a professional learning community (Berry, Clemans and Kostogritz, 2007). Such informal learning "occurs apart from formal courses or institutions, but at the same time 'explicitly' informal learning is carefully defined as that learning which is intentioned and/or identified by the learner, as compared to 'incidental' learning which is unintended and/or unidentified by the learner" (Smaller, 2005, p. 547).

With respect to such learning, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011, p. 81) remind us that "teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see." To this end, these authors also note that this learning requires settings in which there is support for teacher inquiry and collaboration. In particular, the strategies used in any initiatives to promote teacher learning should be grounded in teachers' questions and concerns. To that end, one of the most commonly referenced of these strategies is action research (Jaipal and Figg, 2011), in which teams of educators who work together in cycles of reflection and informed practice in order to teams of educators who work together in order to increase their knowledge of teaching and learning.

In this paper we present three scenarios of how teacher educators were involved with teachers in introducing and up-skilling teachers in a particular curriculum and instruction model. The three scenarios came to light when the four authors were asked to present a conference symposium focused on teachers learning of Sport Education, a curriculum and instructional model. We draw specific attention to the fact that while we were each involved in delivering the same curriculum and instructional model, the social contexts and teachers with which we worked resulted in differing legitimate goals being identified. Each scenario does not reside in what is commonly understood as formalized "school-based teacher education" or "professional development schools". Rather, each illustrates the reality of individual teacher educators looking to initiate partnerships with teachers in the absence of either of the more formalized opportunities, with a view to supporting teachers to continuously develop their knowledge and skills. Each scenario conveys the reciprocated learning and developmental possibilities for the experienced teachers and teacher educators. The teacher educators were transferring their role from a higher education institution to a school. Experienced teachers were involved in trying out and evaluating new practices, while teacher educators developed their learning through addressing the needs and interests of the teachers they worked with. In the three case studies shared in this paper, each teacher had identified their own needs and expectations and approached the respective teacher educators to discuss their particular context and how best to provide support. The teacher educator support was in no way imposed upon them. As noted by Fransson, van Lakerveld and Rohtma (2009, pp. 83-84):

> If possible, the formulation of the goals and the design of the activities could be a joint activity of all participants and part of the activities of in-service learning. In this process, it is important that participants visualize the change: the desired effect, the present position and the route forward to reach the desired position (…) By engaging into a dialogue with the contractors and the teachers, the in-service learning gains legitimacy and support, and as a

> consequence resistance towards learning, innovation and change tends to be reduced.

Professional development and learning in physical education

It has been noted previously that there is a level of frustration with the physical education professional development literature favouring the focus on the in-service component of the continuum. There has been less consideration as to how professional learning can be instilled during initial teacher education. This is particularly with a view to preparing physical education pre-service teachers to understand and enact how best professional learning can be embedded in their own practice and the practices of other teachers (Author, 2011a; Author, 2012a). There continues to be an interest in determining the most effective way in which to enhance the professional development experiences of practicing physical education teachers (Armour, 2011). A more recent move is to a body of literature that expands the professional development and professional learning in physical education discussion to being embedded in school-university partnerships and communities of practice (Parker, Templin and Setiawan, 2012; Patton, 2012).

Each of the professional learning opportunities shared in this paper are related to teachers learning how to most effectively deliver a specific curriculum and instructional model. The relatively recent development and investment in using curriculum and instructional models within school physical education (Lund and Tannehill, 2010; Metzler, 2011) has contributed to such professional learning needs. Aimed at presenting a comprehensive and coherent plan for teaching, these models provide what Meltzer (2011) describes as blueprints for learning, in that they present explicit intended learning outcomes and ways of designing developmentally appropriate and sequenced learning activities. Of all the instructional models discussed by Metzler, there is one in particular that has garnered significant adoption by numerous teachers

across the globe. Called “Sport Education”, this model seeks to provide positive and engaging sporting experiences for young people in schools in order that they become “players in the fullest sense and to help them develop as competent, literate and enthusiastic sportspersons” (Author, 2011b, p. 5). With its philosophy of greater depth of coverage of content and an expanded set of content goals, Sport Education was designed to integrate skills, strategies, and aspects of sport culture in a context in which students participate in an environment emphasizing fair play, equity, and inclusiveness (Author, 2003).

Since its introduction, Sport Education has been adopted by teachers in many countries, and there has been a systematic evaluation of students’ and teachers’ responses. Examples include studies from the United States (Author , 1996), Australia (Alexander and Luckman, 2001), the United Kingdom (Clarke & Quill, 2003), Ireland (Author, 2007), Spain (Author, 2010a), Cyprus (Author, 2012b) and Russia (Author, 2010b). As an executive summary of these findings, for young people Sport Education is seen as an attractive form of physical education as they perceive there is a level of curriculum ownership, particularly as they take roles and responsibilities as part of a persisting team. For teachers, the main attraction aside from increased student enthusiasm is that the model allows for a release from a direct instructional role which allows for more individual attention to students and the ability to achieve other pedagogical tasks such as assessment (Kinchin, 2006). The model has also been significantly evaluated by researchers who have produced over 60 empirical publications examining various aspects of the model (Author, 2011c).

While the initial research on Sport Education was descriptive and reached the outcomes described above, more recent research has been directed towards two areas. The first is the ability of a Sport Education season to achieve the stated goals of the model (i.e., the development

of competent, literate, and enthusiastic sports players). Concurrently, a number of researchers have focused upon the ways in which teachers learn how to use the model. Such studies have examined the success (or not) of various delivery strategies that sport pedagogy academic staff have employed in introducing teachers to the model and supporting them during implementation.

In this paper we focus on the professional learning of teachers as they are introduced to Sport Education. While university teacher educators have the potential for more prolonged engagement with their pre-service students, professional development initiatives within school physical education are often limited to much shorter time periods, often taking the form of workshops. However, as Ko, Wallhead, and Ward (2006) report, when practicing teachers only learn about Sport Education in workshops and seminars without in-school follow up, they do not achieve anything beyond a superficial level of learning of the relatively complex pedagogical strategies involved in teaching. Consistent with previous discussion, Ko, Wallhead and Ward (2006) note that a failure to provide formal support mechanisms designed to overcome the various contextual barriers that occur in schools leads to implementations that often fail to achieve the fundamental goals of the model.

The goal of the paper is to describe a number of initiatives that have been implemented in order to provide an on-going and interactive support system for teachers learning Sport Education in their own schools. Beyond these descriptions, however, we attempt to problematize these attempts in order to better understand and develop ways they can be realized within the constraints of both those delivering professional development initiatives as well as the teachers who are learning to incorporate new skills and instructional strategies.

Three international scenarios are presented in this paper. For each, we follow a consistent format. First, we briefly describe the professional development initiative and provide a rational

for the format of its delivery. This is followed by a more extensive description of the professional development itself and its resultant outcomes. The third part of each scenario serves to highlight the challenges faced by the providers and the teachers during the course of the professional development initiative. In the discussion part of the paper the major themes from these scenarios are presented in terms of the implications for professional development not only in physical education, but across subject areas. The three sites (Ireland, Spain and Taiwan) represented essentially a convenience sample, as the authors of this paper were located in those countries. Nonetheless, in all three cases, the teachers in the schools were attempting their first efforts with the Sport Education model. This factor, combined with the idea that the learning of the model was achieved through the on-going collaboration, is more significant than the locale of the sites of implementation. The evaluation methods for each site varied. The Irish site relied on interviews with the teachers and observations of the teacher educators. At the end of the Spanish program, all teachers completed a survey that sought opinion on the learning experience and the effectiveness of the physical educators who developed the initiative. On completion of the survey, all teachers were interviewed. Due to one of the key elements of assessment in the Taiwan scenario being that of fidelity (i.e., whether or not a teacher who was previously unfamiliar with the model would be able to deliver an authentic Sport Education season), the fidelity of the season was assessed by examining the degree of congruence of planned and actual teacher behaviors to known and immutable tenets of Sport Education.

Scenario one: Modeling Sport Education to primary generalist teachers in Ireland

Initiative and rationale. The aim of this initiative was to undertake a modeling approach with a teacher educator acting as lead instructor in the design and delivery of a Sport Education athletics season to 48 fourth class students (aged 8 and 9 years) across two physical education

classes. In Ireland, primary class teachers deliver all curriculum areas and consequently there is limited scope for the employment of primary physical education specialists. Similar to international practice, primary teacher candidates in Ireland receive only limited training in physical education and thus often lack knowledge and confidence to teach this content. Subsequently, it was felt that the modeling approach would be an effective way to instill in teachers an understanding of how best to design and deliver a Sport Education season.

Professional development initiative and outcomes. The professional development initiative was by no means imposed. One of the two generalist primary teachers in the study had previously been involved in a Sport Education initiative across a number of schools (Author, 2012c) and subsequently, along with her colleague, was proactive in inviting the teacher educator to the school to deliver Sport Education. It was agreed that, on a weekly basis, as a track and field athletics season was being delivered by the teacher educator, the two teachers would parallel the design of an orienteering season they intended to deliver on completion of the athletics season. The particular interest was to examine whether the modeling of Sport Education would provide the primary teachers with sufficient knowledge, skill and confidence to plan and deliver a Sport Education season. That is, provide an example of "how to do Sport Education" for adaptation and application to the design of their own Sport Education season, encouraging the teachers to learn together as well as interact and collaborate with those who have expertise in Sport Education pedagogy.

Each class met weekly for physical education over eight weeks in 45-minute sessions held in a large sports hall. In week nine, the two classes came together for a double period to participate in the athletics culminating event. The primary teachers of each class observed and

assisted with instruction, and informally interacted on the planning of the season. The detail of the Sport Education athletics season delivered is reported by Author (2012d).

Focusing on the teachers' reactions to the modeling experience, they conveyed that the experience allowed them not only to observe "how to do Sport Education" but also alerted them to how students reacted to Sport Education, particularly students embracing the opportunity to undertake different roles during the physical education class. In exploring the teachers' perspectives on their intention of implementing Sport Education in the future, a number of issues arose. The teachers reported that the two aspects of Sport Education they were most likely to continue to pursue in the Sport Education orienteering season they planned was (i) team affiliation and roles and responsibilities and (ii) festivity and culminating event. The teachers appreciated the intent and success (to some extent) of managerial and instructional task cards that had been a particular focus of the modeling, noting how they gained and focused students' attention. They noted hesitation in developing task cards further due to the reliance on students to not only read the instructions but also to adapt the task they were doing in accordance with the task card.

Challenges. Exposure to, and learning about, the Sport Education framework appeared to be the more successful outcome for the teachers through the modeling initiative than what the actual modeling initiative intended to offer in terms of an active role for teachers on a week-by-week basis and maintaining weekly notes on the intricacies of delivering Sport Education. The teachers admitted that they were not confident to transfer their exposure to Sport Education to another area within the physical education curriculum. It appeared that it was not the Sport Education framework that was the issue here but rather the teachers' lack of confidence in having sufficient knowledge in another content area of physical education to reconfigure a Sport

Education season. A final issue that arose was finding sufficient space in their day to invest in professional learning, admitting that they would not have, or were not prepared to make available, the same amount of time the teacher educator had invested in preparing all the resources for the Sport Education season. The initial plan to have the teachers meet with the teacher educator on a weekly basis after each week's athletics class to parallel plan the orienteering season based on what the teacher educator had modeled that particular week did not transpire. This was due to the teachers being unable to find time in their teaching day.

Scenario two: On-going learning of Sport Education in Spain

Initiative and rationale. The aim of this initiative was to promote the use of information and communication technologies and group, reflexive and active learning among a cohort of Spanish physical education specialist teachers. Professional development in Spain is planned around the Teachers Resource Centres and, within that framework, any university staff member and any other teaching professionals can design and propose professional development courses. In order to implement such a centre, approval has to be granted from the central Teacher Resource Center and the local Department of Education, before recruiting a minimum number of teachers interested in participating in the project.

Professional development initiative and outcomes.The main features of this professional development for Sport Education was based on the ideas of Ko, Wallhead, and Ward (2006), McCaughtry, Sofo, Rovegno, and Curtner-Smith (2004), and Author (2009b). It was delivered twice a week (one theoretical and one practical) during one month. The theoretical lessons involved the participants randomly assigned to teams (a feature consistent with the Sport Education model), before determining their team roles (researcher, secretary, reporter), team name, team color, team logo, and team goal for the professional development course. This was

followed by lectures describing the main features of Sport Education and within-team reflections about the content being taught. These reflections were guided by questions which related to the specific aspects of the model that was being introduced that week (e.g., team selection, modified games, or assessment). Teachers also viewed sample lessons of each phase of the model which was followed by an analysis of the lesson conducted by the teacher educator in order to discuss concerns and promote team discussion. Finally a team assessment of the content was conducted.

During the practical components of the delivery there was (i) a review of the key points, goals and key issues that had been shared earlier in the week through the practical class, (ii) practice within teams of the newly assigned practical roles (captain, coach, player, referee, equipment and scorekeeper), (iii) reflection and critical analysis of the large group session by each of the participants, and (iv) the sharing of personal experiences of some teachers who had a previous experience with Sport Education seasons.

Following these practical sessions, all participants began to plan their first season, and following feedback from the whole group, were encouraged to apply them in their school settings. Implementation was supported through briefing and debriefing sessions via e-mails, and telephone conversations similar to the process used by Author (2009b). A wiki was also developed as a depository for all the materials needed by teachers as well as a forum in which they could post their reflective teaching logs.

During the implementation phase, a weekly group meeting was held to allow the participants to share their experiences and feedback. At the completion of the professional development initiative, the program was evaluated to determine (i) teacher learning/understanding of the main theoretical and practical features of Sport Education, (ii) the instruction and fidelity of a season in their schools, and (iii) the perception of learning and

enthusiasm of the students who "lived the curriculum" (Author, 2011a). Analysis of the teachers' logs and interviews suggested a need for less theory and more opportunity to experience the different components of Sport Education and physical education mediums (e.g., team, individual sports, and dance. The teachers stated they would like more sample lessons and more group discussion for a more comprehensive understanding of the core features of the model. They also commented that they had too much work to do in such a short period of time to support the Sport Education season (e.g., wiki, blog, practice plans, and homework). Lastly, while the teachers had initial reservations about whether they were sufficiently competent to plan the first season in their own, they were appreciative of the weekly meetings, the informal discussions, and the round tables where they could share experiences with peers.

Challenges and obstacles. Feedback suggested that teachers developed self-efficacy, but were still reliant on the on-site visits to confirm they were remaining true to the intent of the model and to resolve problems. There were also some issues with respect to the teachers' motivation for participation in the professional development course. It became evident that some teachers undertook the professional development course in the first instance in order to gain credits to improve their teaching standing. By consequence, also expected some form of extrinsic rewards (e.g., equipment) and this appeared to be favoured over the intrinsic motivation of learning and improving the quality of their teaching.

Scenario three: Using distance technologies in Taiwan

Initiative and rationale. The purpose of this project was to provide a physical education teacher in Taiwan with a professional development initiative that began on-site and was then continued through a long-distance, web-based platform. The curricular focus of the professional development initiative was Sport Education. In Taiwan, there is no requirement for physical

education teachers to attend or participate in continuous learning activities and these activities are not funded by the government (Author, 2013). Therefore, opportunities for meaningful engagement in continuous professional development within the country for physical educators are extremely limited.

However, with the advent and rapid development of distant education technologies, innovative approaches to the modes of delivering professional development present unique opportunities of providing access to long distance and web-based forms of professional development to those who are in remote locales or to those who may have limited access. The project was carried out at a school located in northwestern Taiwan.

Professional development initiative and outcomes. The professional development initiative was voluntary and followed the established seven phases of providing an effective Sport Education Professional Development Program (Author, 2012b). These phases included (i) establishing a point of entry, (ii) recognizing the stakeholders and decision makers, (iii) marketing Sport Education, (iv) providing printed materials, (v) securing teachers' agreement and staying in contact, (vi) conducting the Sport Education workshop, and (vii) providing immersive and extensive professional development support.

While all phases of the initiative were enacted, the critical elements for this particular programme were the initial on-site workshop and subsequent long-distance and web-based professional development component. The initial on-site workshop, which lasted eight meetings, was carried out at the school and involved a Sport Education expert working with the physical education teacher on the key aspects of the model implementation. In addition, the complete Sport Education season and individual detailed lesson plans were collaboratively developed

during that time. It is worth noting that the Taiwanese physical education teacher was previously unfamiliar with Sport Education and previously utilized traditional pedagogies in his teaching.

The long-distance, web-based component emulated "the extensive on-site presence of the person delivering professional development to train, observe, and assist in curriculum implementations" and was carried out through a virtual platform and on-line presence (Author, 2009b, p. 105). Specifically, after the one-month workshop conducted on-site, the remainder of professional development was carried out during the Sport Education season through email correspondence, instant messaging, and online video-conferencing using Skype. The teacher regularly (before and after each lesson) communicated with the expert allowing for briefing and de-briefing sessions to take place. The teacher also created a website dedicated to the season that allowed the expert to view student profiles, team statistics, score sheet, action photos and short video clips. These immediate artifacts grounded and facilitated expert's understanding of the season's progress as well as pedagogical process implemented by the teacher relative to the model.

The complete details of the 22 lesson volleyball Sport Education season are described in the report by Author (2013). The Taiwanese physical education teacher was able to plan, organize, implement, and deliver an iteration of Sport Education that was consistent with immutable characteristics of the model following a long distance, web-based professional development program that began with an on-site workshop. However, the implementation of Sport Education required the teacher to alter his teaching style and move towards a different to him form of pedagogy. The teacher moved away from direct instruction, provided more responsibilities to students, and becameself-aware of the change that took place in his teaching and organizational skills. The structure of Sport Education required him to provide more efficient

organization and management, explicit instructions appropriate for peer teaching and student-led activities, and to teach not only rules, skills and strategies of a sport but also have an impact on students" ethical development.

Challenges. A number of situational constraints had an impact on the teacher, his teaching, the students, and the Sport Education season. When learning to teach Sport Education, the physical education teacher had to adopt this new knowledge in his school setting while concurrently negotiating contextual factors that limited the model's adoption. These situational constraints included school-specific and colleague-related factors.

School-specific situational constraints included unavailability of facilities and various school events. Limited facilities and uncooperative weather affected the planning of the season while other disruptions, such as track meets, semi-annual physical exams, field trips, midterm and final exams had an impact on a total of ten lessons and resulted in many adjustments being made during the season.

However, colleague related constraints were more significant. Specifically, the physical education teacher worked in a physical education department that included two other teachers, both of whom had seniority over him. During the planning phase, other teachers agreed to allocate both available volleyball courts to the Sport Education class. However, when students' enthusiasm and excitement became evident during pre-season and formal competition phases of Sport Education, the other teachers decided to conduct their own volleyball units falsely attributing the level of student enthusiasm to the sport. Consequently, the teacher who was conducting the Sport Education season was forced to share the volleyball courts with other classes. This change in the number of courts available for Sport Education resulted in a complete redesign of the competition format for the season. These challenges were mediated by the virtual

omnipresence of the professional development support that helped sustain the curricular innovation. However their occurrences highlight the difficulties facing teachers who choose to deviate from traditional teaching and implement novel curricular approaches such as Sport Education. It also strengthens the support for previous research advocating the need for continual support, whether on-site (O"Sullivan and Deglau, 2006; Sinelnikov, 2009) or virtual (Chen et al., 2013).

Discussion

In attempting to provide an on-going and interactive support system for teachers learning Sport Education in their own schools, the three scenarios present here prompt us to consider the most effective ways to work with teachers. Such considerations that we visit in turn are (i) the necessary investment in time for teacher and teacher educators, (ii) the accessibility and availability of the professional development provider and (iii) the teacher educator leading by example as regards professional learning.

Time investment

Consistent across all three scenarios is the time commitment required from teachers and teacher educators. For the teacher educators' professional development, there was a requirement for a commitment of significant time towards the project. Importantly, this time extends beyond that found in more familiar professional development efforts with travelling to and from the school as well as the preparation of materials including lecture presentations, resources for teachers and other supporting documents. For such efforts to be sustainable, certain conditions must exist. First, universities who employ teacher educators must value their effort in terms of including it in their professional remit. In some universities within the United States, academic staff have a specific allocation in their workload for what is called "outreach." By definition this

endeavour refers to the function of applying academic expertise to the direct benefit of external audiences in support of university and unit missions. Nonetheless in most cases, the notion of outreach *scholarship* accompanies an expectation suggests that researcher have a responsibility to not only generate new knowledge for advancing the discipline but to also translate this knowledge into practical means of applying this knowledge for its constituents (e.g. those engaged in agriculture or education).

While the investment of time from the teacher educators appeared to be very much intrinsically motivated, there was also some evidence that the teachers' investment fluctuated between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While all the teachers voluntarily undertook the professional learning opportunities and agreed the expectations with the respective teacher educator, there was a hint that the teachers and teacher educators had a mismatch in terms of what was a necessary commitment as regards investment of time. There was a hint that as the opportunities intensified the teacher educators were more positively disposed to the continual investment of time than the teachers.

Accessibility and availability of professional development provider

One of the most common features of the scenarios is the idea of accessibility. That is, the teachers who were learning Sport Education were able to contact the providers with question or concerns regarding philosophical or procedural issues that arose during lessons. Be it in pre-lesson conferences on site or via telephone, electronic mail, or Skype, the teachers were afforded a level of autonomy and control over the progression of their learning. This is in contrast to the findings of Armour and Yelling (2004) who noted that many forms of professional development are delivered with no teacher input at all. However, there appeared to be limited engagement with a deliberate attempt to break the reliance on the teacher educator to move towards more

self-reliant learning for the teacher. That is, once the Sport Education season in each scenario was completed there appeared to be no enforcement of a contingency plan for the teachers to maintain contact with the teacher educators as they considered continuing with Sport Education or exploring further professional learning opportunities. As Bechtel and O"Sullivan (2006, p. 368) "staff development programs must provide continual support and follow-up after initial training."

Modeling learning

Each of the teacher educators was somewhat challenged in developing their own professional learning with respect to listening to the needs of the teacher(s) and considering how to most effectively address these through discussion with the teacher(s). This models for teachers the practice of sharing expectations and learning from each other, a valuable experience outside of focusing solely on increasing one's knowledge of Sport Education. In the scenarios shared here, it is likely that all teachers lacked confidence in the content and instructional strategies of physical education and therefore welcomed a learning opportunity that allowed this need to be addressed through a range of educational modes.

It is clear from the above three themes that the relationship between teacher education and the school sector is crucial to understanding the field of interest, appreciating that teacher educators have on-going senses of professional responsibility to teachers and to school education (Murray, Swennen & Shagrir, 2009; Snoek & Zogla, 2009). The gap between teacher education institutes and schools is somewhat addressed through this extended notion of professional responsibility due to teacher educators becoming acquainted with school reality (van Velzen, Bezzina & Lorist, 2009). Teacher educators require permanent professional learning

opportunities if they are to effectively service/facilitate teacher learning. Such opportunities will challenge teacher educators to adopt a variety of different roles and require additional knowledge and skills. This in turn allows them to practice what they preach with respect to conveying to teachers the centrality of professional learning. Each of the scenarios reported in this paper operated with the premise that a central role of the teacher educator is (or at least should be) to engage in professional learning of serving teachers through the delivery of in-service courses / professional learning initiatives.

Conclusion

Recommendations for teachers undertaking professional learning and those providing professional learning experiences were evident across all three scenarios. Such recommendations are somewhat generalizable to all subject disciplines as practitioners and teacher educators appear to favor the process and associated pedagogies of professional learning that the specific content focus of initiatives. The fact that the recommendations arise from three different scenarios in three different countries allows readers to assess the extent to which the cultural setting in which they reside is/is not that different from those reported here.

From the Irish scenario, school-based, collaborative and informal learning, in which teachers engage voluntarily, continued to be supported as the tenets of effective professional learning. A further recommendation, directed specifically at teacher educators, was that teacher educators should be involved in providing professional learning opportunities for teachers in schools, that this should be acknowledged as a legitimate professional responsibility and hence be reflected in the remit of those working in teacher education. The Spanish scenario resulted in recommendations predominantly for teachers undertaking professional learning opportunities and included undertaking professional learning with a friend/colleague, choosing an area of

content you like, find a way in which to make the experience personal to you and your context and be prepared to make some mistakes. The main recommendations for those providing the professional learning experiences were to favor a facilitator role than that of a director. Immediate and constant feedback and communication with the professional development team was seen as a key factor to the success of the program in the Taiwanese scenario. In addition, low cost, prolonged duration as well as contextual nature of the program taking place at a participant's school were cited as successful features of the program that facilitated its implementation.

Traditional professional developments programs have been critiqued as being disconnected from the end users – teachers in schools. In this paper we have described three cases where university professors served to provide an on-going and interactive support system for teachers learning Sport Education in their own schools. The goal of these initiatives was to promote the professional learning of the teacher and to allow for the effective implementation of a quite complex curriculum model. While in all cases, the teachers were indeed able to provide their students with positive experiences in Sport Education, and were also able to better understand the nuances of the model. The paper has also identified the significant issue of time that confronts university staff (and school teachers) when the professional learning providers move into schools to delivery programmatic interventions.

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